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The Whistles May Harm Hearing, article incorrectly states that whistles may cause damage to hearing and is totally false and misleading. In order for a whistle to cause damage it has to be a continuous sustained blow for the 48 seconds directly into the ear. An average whistle blow is half a second so a referee would need to call 96 penalties with one blow of the whistle! It is common knowledge that short blasts that allow the ear drum to rest between blasts will not cause damage. Therefore unless you're blowing the whistle continuously into your own ears for 48 seconds, the whistle should not cause harm. Stadium noise which includes, crowd noise and music and a person's age are the real factors that will cause hearing damage and the perceived "referees ear".

The whistle is designed to give the ear a break - those other factors do not give the ear a break. We have clearly stated on our package since 1987 not to blow directly into ear. The natural design of our whistles takes the sound away from the user's ear so that is a warning to the user not to blow it into someone else's ear. In addition whistles are designed with differing tones to allow for smaller or larger facilities. Noise cancellation devices offer a customized noise-exposure for those concerned about stadium noise.

Reality is, everyone's noise exposure is different at varying times in their life and everyone's hearing levels differ, if you expanded this survey to include non-referees, example: spectators leaving the stadium after the game, there would be even more people experiencing ringing in their ears as those people are even closer to the stadium sound systems and crowd noise than the referee. Only half of the referees experience ringing but most of the fans probably would.

Bottom line - the whistle allows for resting of the ear drum between blasts so damage will not occur. Other noise, like the loud music of your car radio, does not.

A referee should not be in a position to continuously use his whistle for 48 seconds. In our humor of officiating if a referee ever blows 96 penalties in 48 seconds then he should give up refing.

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